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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an inservice model that uses the team approach for classrooms with exceptional children. Rather than providing inservice training to large groups of educators, this model proposes training a team of people who will work together in the same school. The team includes regular classroom teachers, special education resource teachers, speech therapists, and counselors. Activities in the model concern: 1) general information about the exceptional students and the educational implications of their handicaps, 2) the various functions of individual team members, and 3) methods and materials to be used in the teaching of the exceptional students. As a result, educators should better understand the roles and abilities of all members of the delivery team. (Author/CJ)

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# THE TEAM APPROACH--
# AN INSERVICE TRAINING MODEL for SPECIAL EDUCATION

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An Inservice Training Model



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## Abstract

Current legislation requires that all handicapped children be afforded a free appropriate education, and to the maximum extent appropriate, this education shall occur alongside nonhandicapped children. This places the burden of educating many handicapped children on regular classroom teachers. Many attempts have been made to in-service these regular teachers in methods of effectively dealing with handicapped children. Unfortunately, much of this in-service has been unsuccessful. This paper presents an alternative model to be used in providing necessary training to regular classroom teachers. It focuses on the team approach. Rather than providing in-service training to large groups of educators, this model proposes training a team of people, the same people who will work together in specific schools. As a result of using this approach, educators should better understand the roles and abilities of all members of the delivery team.

# THE TEAM APPROACH--
# AN INSERVICE TRAINING MODEL for SPECIAL EDUCATION

With the passage of Public Laws 93-380 and 94-142, the concept of educating handicapped children in the "least restrictive environment" has become mandatory. This means that "to the maximum extent possible" children will be in the "mainstream" of the school with regular teachers bearing a large responsibility for their education. Unfortunately, too often the regular educator has had no experience or training in how to deal with exceptional children. Without this preparation, the mainstreamed exceptional child is apt to receive less than optimal instruction. In this situation the intent of the law--a free appropriate public education-- will not have been achieved. Therefore, strategies must be developed and implemented that will prepare the regular teacher to provide effective instruction to handicapped children.

## The Problem

Attempts have been made to prepare regular classroom teachers with workshops, inservice training, and preservice training with varying degrees of success. In one such study, Haring, Stern, and Cruickshank (1958) examined the effects of a workshop on the attitudes toward exceptional children. One hundred forty-one teachers and administrators from four school districts were involved. Pretest data were obtained with five scales--the General Information Inventory, the Classroom Integration Inventory, the Activities Index, the Picture Judgment Test, and the

Critical Incident Test. Treatment consisted of fifteen two-hour sessions in which information was isseminated and discussed concerning eight areas of exceptionality. Participants were then posttested with the same instruments. Results showed that the workshop effected positive attitude changes toward exceptional children.

In another study Lovett (1974) studied the changes brought about by an inservice training program on the acceptance of learning disabled students by regular primary teachers. The 234 students were divided into a control group and a treatment group. The treatment consisted of eight two-hour inservice sessions dealing with the learning disabled child. A modified version of the Classroom Integration Inventory was administered to both groups as a pretest and as a posttest. Results indicated a significant difference in the pretest-posttest gain scores of the two groups, leading to the conclusion that the inservice program had positive effects on the attitudes of the experimental group.

Unfortunately, educators often overlook the fact that within the least-restrictive-environment approach a group of people is available to provide educational services to the exceptional child. This group is composed of many persons, chief among whom are the regular classroom teacher, the special education teacher, the educational examiner, the school principal, the speech pathologist, the reading teacher, the instructional specialist and resource consultants. The mere presence of these specialists does not guarantee an appropriate educational experience

for handicapped children. This loosely allied group of professionals each armed with a unique background of experiences, a unique perspective on his role as a "child helper," and a unique set of techniques for providing services must be fused into a cooperative and efficient working team able to execute a unified strategy for each child.

There are many factors which make this team either successful or unsuccessful. Of primary importance is communication. Team members must be able to communicate with one another. Martin (1975), in relating this need to regular classroom teachers and special education teachers, says that it is not enough for special educators to instruct regular teachers in the pedagogy of special education, "but to share in the feelings, to understand their fears, to provide them with assistance and materials, and in short, to assure their success." This requires communication--close communication. The team trying to deliver an optimal educational program to the exceptional child must work together. Therefore, training sessions where these people are trained in working together as a team would appear to be a positive step in preparing this group to deliver services to these children.

Two elements seem critical to the successful communication of team members. First, understanding the nature and needs of handicapped children to be served by all team members. This knowledge can be developed through an inservice program involving instruction on exceptionalities. Second, is the development of a consensus among team

members regarding the role that each should play in the team service effort. The first step in developing such a consenus is to clarify the professional skills and philosophy of each team member as it pertains to providing service to the handicapped child. Put more concretely, members must educate fellow members with respect to their capabilities and their ideas about the most effective role they can play. This information can be used as a basis for group agreement on a strategy of service delivery that most effectively utilizes the capabilities of group members and that is most agreeable to the team members.

Initially, members of the team serving the mainstreamed handicapped child need to understand and accept their role within the team's activities. Additionally, the roles of other team members and the interrelationships of these roles need to be understood and appreciated. These roles are likely to vary to some degree from one team to another. This is due to many factors, chief among which are the individual capabilities and personalities of the team members. This is another reason to train specific persons to work with others as a team that will provide educational services to a mainstreamed handicapped child.

Training a team to perform a task is not a new approach. For example, in preparing astronauts to explore the moon, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has trained persons to perform as a team. Each member of the team learns his responsibilities, the responsibilities of his teammates, and the interrelationships of these responsibilities.

Without this type of training, it is unlikely that our successes in space exploration would have been as remarkable as they have been. Other examples of team training can be found in the fields of surgery, athletics, manufacturing, business, and the military, just to name a few examples.

## The Proposed Model

The proposed inservice training model attempts to train educators who work together in providing an appropriate education for handicapped children as a team. Usually within individual schools, certain regular classrooms are the responsibility of a special education resource teacher. Also, ancillary personnel such as speech therapists, diagnosticians, and counselors, are usually assigned to particular classrooms or schools. The professionals who work together in these capacities form a delivery cell that provides services to handicapped children. Figure 1 gives an example of two delivery cells. If members of this cell do not colloborate in their efforts, the function of the cell will be greatly restricted.

Insert Figure 1 about here

By training members of the delivery cell to perform as team members, rather than individuals functioning in esoteric roles, the quality of the cell's activities should be enhanced considerably. The following areas should be included in this inservice model:

1. General Information about Exceptional Children--This should give some general information about exceptional children, including characteristics, terminology, and expectations. This section should emphasize the educational implications caused by each type of handicap.

2. Team Functioning--This section of inservice training should reveal the roles played by all team members in the delivery team and the interrelationships among these roles. Procedures for dealing with specific problem areas should be discussed, with role playing being one method of acquainting team members of the activities that should occur within the team when attempting to deliver an appropriate education to handicapped children. Communication skills should be stressed continuously during this section of inservice and each team should be free to arrive at its own unique style of working relationship. This can be accomplished by each team member sharing his perception of his functions or roles and how he would feel most comfortable working with other team members. Divergence of opinion needs to be worked through and a consensus arrived at regarding the most acceptable working arrangement. An overall "unique-to-this group" service delivery and internal communication strategy should be developed and tested out. Later in the year the group should reconvene to discuss needed modifications and to evaluate the performance of the group.

3. Methods and Materials for Exceptional Children--Included in this section should be specific measures for working with handicapped children. Task analysis and behavior modification should be two areas stressed, along with some ideas for types of materials to be used with specific categories of exceptional children.

References

Haring, N. G., Stern, G. G., & Cruickshank, W. M. Attitudes of Educators Toward Exceptional Children. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1958.

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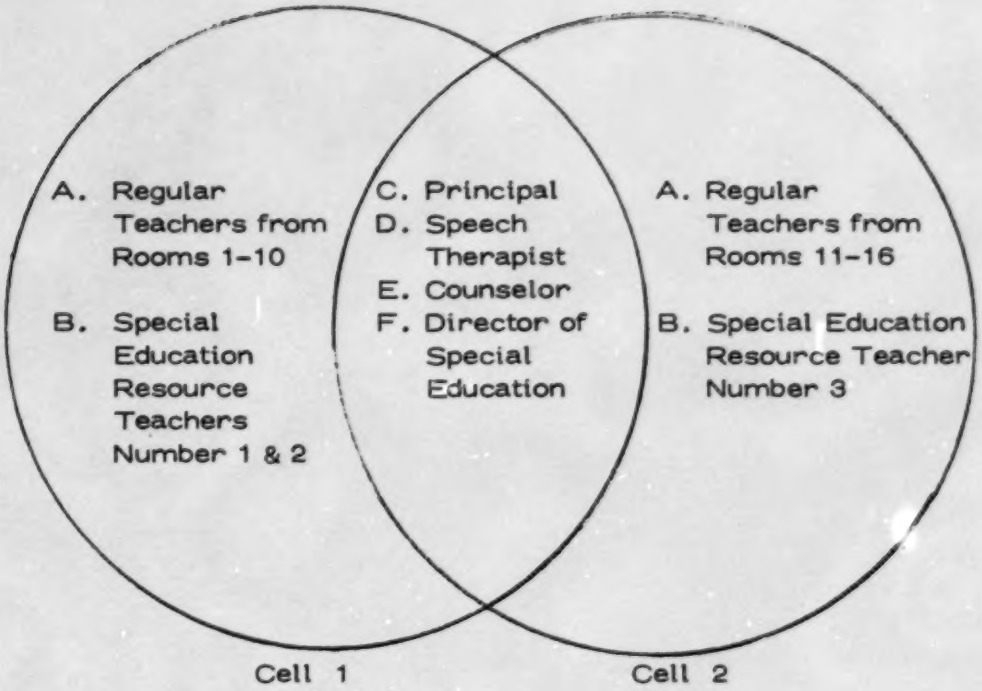
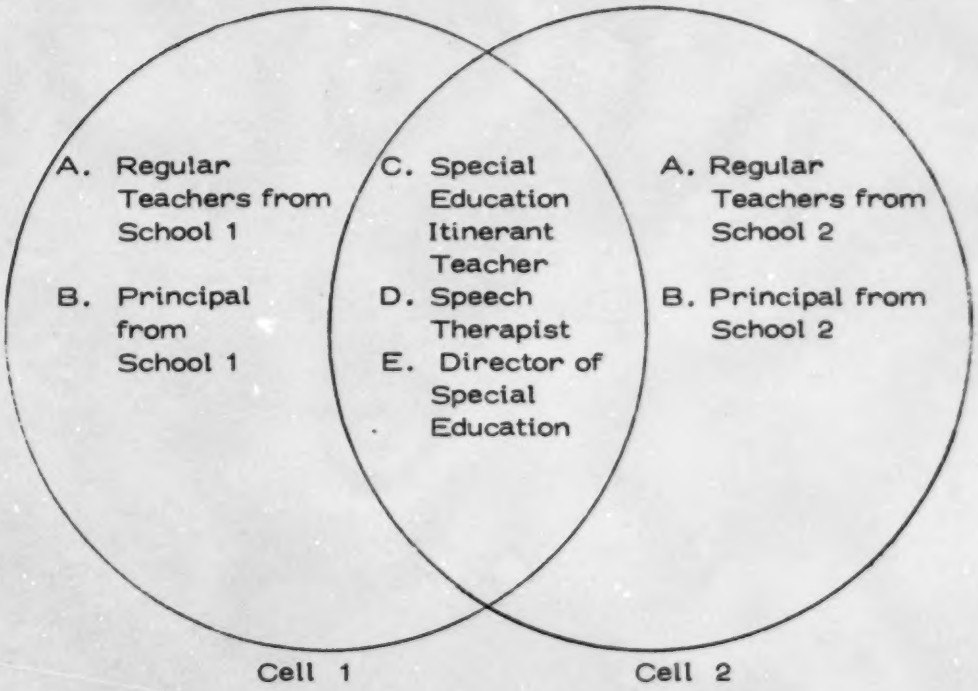
Martin, E. W. Some thoughts on mainstreaming. Exceptional Children, 1974, 41, 150-153.

A School with Two Delivery Cells


A. Regular Teachers from Rooms 1-10
B. Special Education Resource Teachers Number 1 & 2
C. Principal
D. Speech Therapist
E. Counselor
F. Director of Special Education
A. Regular Teachers from Rooms 11-16
B. Special Education Resource Teacher Number 3
Cell 1
Cell 2

A School District with Two Delivery Cells


A. Regular Teachers from School 1
B. Principal from School 1
C. Special Education Itinerant Teacher
D. Speech Therapist
E. Director of Special Education
A. Regular Teachers from School 2
B. Principal from School 2
Cell 1
Cell 2